

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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-----095753 151214Z /46

R 150506Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3014
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

C O N F I D E N T I A L JIDDA 5940

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, SA
SUBJECT: THOUGHTS FROM SAUDI ARABIA ON MIDEAST PEACE

1. DEVELOPMENTS SINCE ATHERTON VISIT OF POSSIBLE INTEREST
AND SIGNIFICANCE INCLUDE:

(A) FRONT PAGE ARTICLE IN 14 AUGUST ARAB NEWS ENTITLED
"ATHERTON ENDS MISSION" HAS FOLLOWING INTERESTING QUOTE:
"HOWEVER, THE KINGDOM WHICH HAS WITHHELD PUBLIC COMMENT ON
SADAT'S NINE-MONTH PEACE INITIATIVE HAS WELCOMED THE FORTH-
COMING CAMP DAVID SUMMIT. PRINCE FAHD DESCRIBED THE SUMMIT AS
'A COURAGEOUS STEP AND AN ENCOURAGING INDICATION REFLECTING THE
AMERICAN PRESIDENT'S GOOD INTENTIONS AND THE SINCERE DESIRE
OF THE UNITED STATES TO PLAY A MORE EFFECTIVE ROLE TO REACH A
JUST SOLUTION THAT COULD BRING PEACE TO THE REGION.' "

(B) PRINCE TURKI AL-FAISAL LEFT ON SATURDAY FOR TOUR OF
ARAB COUNTRIES, STOPPING IN AMMAN, DAMASCUS AND BAGHDAD.
ACCORDING TO TODAY'S PRESS, HE MET ON SUNDAY WITH IRAQI
VICE PRESIDENT SADDAM HUSSEIN TO DELIVER A LETTER FROM CROWN
PRINCE FAHD, AND IT WAS ALSO STATED THAT HE BROUGHT A LETTER
FROM KING KHALID TO IRAQI PRESIDENT AHMAD HASSAN BAKR.
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2. CONTINUING UNEQUIVOCAL PUBLIC SUPPORT BY SAG OF THE
CAMP DAVID SUMMIT IS, WE BELIEVE, SIGNIFICANT, ESPECIALLY WHEN
COUPLED WITH PRINCE TURKI'S VISITS TO OTHER
ARAB STATES. HERE ARE SOME OF THE REASONS:

(A) FOR THE FIRST TIME, THE SAUDIS NOW PUBLICLY
SUPPORT THE SADAT-U.S. EFFORTS IN THE PEACE PROCESS, THIS

SUPPORT HAS BECOME EVEN STRONGER WITH THE PASSAGE OF TIME AS SHOWN BY TODAY'S PRESS, WHICH USUALLY REFLECTS WITH ACCURACY THE CURRENT THINKING OF SAG.

(B) THIS CONTINUED PUBLIC SUPPORT, ABSENT SIMILAR VIEWS OF OTHER ARAB STATES, ESPECIALLY JORDAN, IS DEPARTURE FROM NORMAL SAUDI PRACTICE--THEY ORDINARILY AVOID AT ALL COSTS GETTING IN THE MIDDLE OF A POLITICAL CONTROVERSY SUCH AS THIS.

(C) PRINCE TURKI'S HURRIED VISITS TO OTHER ARAB STATES MEANS TO US THAT SAUDIS WERE ANXIOUS TO EXPLAIN THEIR SUPPORT OF CAMP DAVID MEETING TO THEIR ARAB BROTHERS AND, IF POSSIBLE, KEEP UP THE MOMENTUM FOR ARAB UNITY BEGUN BY RECENT FAHD'S VISITS.

3. COMMENT: THE SAUDIS EVIDENTLY THINK THAT REESTABLISHMENT OF ARAB UNITY IS NOT INCONSISTENT WITH THEIR PUBLIC SUPPORT OF THE CAMP DAVID SUMMIT. TO US, THIS IS A DISCERNIBLE CHANGE IN THEIR PREVIOUS DISINCLINATION TO SUPPORT PUBLICLY DIRECT TALKS BETWEEN GOI AND GOE. THIS DEVELOPMENT SHOULD BE WATCHED AND IF POSSIBLE ENCOURAGED WHEREVER POSSIBLE.

4. THE SAUDIS BELIEVE, AND WE OF COURSE CONCUR, THAT BRINGING HUSSEIN AND ASSAD INTO THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS,CESS IS AN ESSENTIAL, MONUMENTAL STEP IN THE PEACE PROCESS, ESPECIALLY IF SUCH COULD BE MADE TO HAPPEN WITHOUT REPUDIATION OF SADAT INITIATIVE. THE FACT THAT THE SAUDIS ARE WILLING TO TAKE SOME INITIATIVE AND SUFFER SOME VISIBILITY

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IN PROMOTING THE FIRST FAINT STEPS IN THIS DIRECTION MAY BE AN ENCOURAGING SIGN.

5. HOPEFULLY, THE SAUDIS WILL CONTINUE THIS LINE UNTIL SUMMIT AND THEREBY MINIMIZE ARAB DISSENTS AND CRITICISMS.

6. ON THE NEGATIVE SIDE, EXPECTATIONS WILL HAVE BEEN RAISED AND IF THERE IS NOT NOTICEABLE ACCOMPLISHMENT AT CAMP DAVID, THE SAUDIS DISILLUSIONMENT WILL BE MARKED AND IT WILL BE DIFFICULT TO PERSUADE THEM TO CONTINUE SADAT SUPPORT.

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